

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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R 301635Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY RABAT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5540

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 RABAT 2576

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PBOR MO SS SP

SUBJ: SPANISH SAHARA: UN MISSION VISIT TO MOROCCO

1. SUMMARY. THREE-MEMBER UN MISSION, IN MOROCCO FROM MAY 22-28 TO STUDY SPANISH SAHARA QUESTION, HAD TWO AUDIENCES WITH KING AND, AMID GREAT FANFARE, MET WITH SAHRAOUI "REFUGEES" IN SWING THROUGH SOUTH OF COUNTRY. MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF VISIT WAS MEETINGS WITH KING, AND LITTLE YET KNOWN ABOUT WHAT TOOK PLACE IN THESE DISCUSSIONS. GOM'S EFFORT TO SHOW MISSION THAT THERE WERE SAHRAOUI ON BOTH SIDES OF FRONTIER WHO WISHED MOROCCO TO RECOVER SAHARA RESULTED IN SOME TRANSPARENT THEATRICALS, AND REMAINS TO BE SEEN HOW THIS PERFORMANCE INFLUENCED MISSION'S THINKING. IN LAST ANALYSIS, MISSION'S ACTIVITIES HERE AND ELSEWHERE IN REGION OF SECONDARY IMPORTANCE TO MOVES BEING MADE IN INTERESTED CAPITALS. SPANISH
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ANNOUNCEMENT OF POLICY, WHICH TOOK PLACE WHILE MISSION

WAS IN SOUTH, IS OUTSTANDING CASE IN POINT. END SUMMARY.

2. THREE-MEMBER FACT-FINDING MISSION FROM UN DECOLONIZATION COMMITTEE VISITED MOROCCO MAY 22-28. MISSION HAD VISITED MADRID ON SPANISH SAHARA EARLIER, AND MOROCCO STAY BEING FOLLOWED BY STOPS IN ALGERIA AND MAURITANIA. MISSION WAS HEADED BY SIMEON AKE OF IVORY COAST WHO WAS ASSISTED BY MARTHA JIMENEZ MARTINEZ OF CUBA AND MANUCHEHR PISHVA OF IRAN. MISSION SAW KING HASSAN AT BEGINNING AND END OF ITS STAY IN MOROCCO AND IN INTERIM VISITED AGADIR, MARRAKECH AND FAR SOUTHERN TOWNS OF TAN TAN AND ZAG.

3. MOROCCAN OFFICIALS WHO ACCOMPANIED DELEGATION THROUGHOUT ITS TRAVELS WERE: KING'S SECURITY CHIEF, COLONEL AHMED DLI MI; SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SAHARAN AFFAIRS, ABDESLAM ZENINED; SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INTERIOR, DRISS BASRI; SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AHMED CHERKAOUT; ROYAL CABINET DIRECTOR, AHMED BENSOU DA; AND MOROCCO'S UN PERM REP DRISS SLAOUL. LEADERS OF MOST OF THE COUNTRY'S MAJOR POLITICAL GROUPS ALSO PARTICIPATED IN PROCEEDINGS FROM TIME TO TIME. POPULAR MOVEMENT LEADER MAHJOUBI AHERDAN WAS PARTICULARLY ACTIVE. JOURNALISTS AND PRESS ATTACHES FROM SOME 20 EMBASSIES IN RABAT WERE IN ATTENDANCE DURING MISSION'S TRIP TO SOUTH AS GUESTS OF THE INFORMATION MINISTRY. DLI MI AND ZENINED SAID TO HAVE BEEN GUIDING GENIUSES FOR SOUTHER SWING.

4. MISSION GAVE LITTLE PUBLIC CLUE AS TO HOW IT VIEWED ITS MOROCCAN INTERLUDE. IN HIS DEPARTURE STATEMENT MAY 28, AKE PAID TRIBUTE TO WARM RECEPTION GIVEN BY MOROCCANS AND NOTED THAT MISSION'S MEETING WITH KING HAD BEEN "EXTREMELY FRATERNAL AND CORDIAL." AKE SAID THAT IT WOULD BE PREMATURE FOR HIM TO GIVE HIS IMPRESSIONS OF HIS STAY BEFORE MISSION WAS COMPLETED.

5. PRIMARY FOCUS OF MISSION'S VISIT TO SOUTH WAS "REFUGEE CAMPS" WHICH MISSION VISITED IN AGADIR, TAN TAN AND ZAG. GOVERNOR OF TARFAYA PROVINCE IN FAR SOUTH, WHO ACTED AS A SORT OF PRESS SPOKESMAN DURING MISSION'S SOUTHERN SWING, CONFIRMED REPORTS THAT CAMPS HAD BEEN SET UP RECENTLY IN ORDER TO GIVE SAHRAOUI RALLYING POINTS FROM WHICH THEY COULD EXPRESS THEIR SENTIMENTS TO THE UN MISSION. EMBOFF WHO TRAVELLED WITH MISSION IN CONFIDENTIAL

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SOUTH NOTED THAT MANY TENTS, PARTICULARLY AT TAN TAN CAMP, HAD NEVER BEEN INHABITED AND TOWNSPEOPLE THERE MADE IT CLEAR THAT MANY OF THEM HAD COME TO CAMPS ONLY FOR MISSION'S VISIT. TARFAYA GOVERNOR'S REMARKS AND TOWNSPEOPLE'S COMMENTS INDICATED THAT A "REFUGEE" WAS ANYONE WHO HAD AT ONE TIME BEEN IN SPANISH SAHARA AND HAD COME OUT SINCE 1957. "ANY SAHRAOUI WHO TURNS UP HERE," GOVERNOR SAID, "IS ONLY 50 PERCENT REFUGEE SINCE HE IS, AFTER ALL, IN HIS HOMELAND."

GOVERNOR CONFIRMED NEWSPAPER REPORTS THAT NUMBER OF REFUGEES IN TARFAYA HAD GROWN OF LATE AS RESULT OF SPANISH DECISION TO "CLOSE" MOROCCAN-SAHARAN FRONTIER TO PERSONS WISHING TO RETURN TO COLONY. DROUGHT OF RECENT YEARS HAD ALSO LEAD MANY NOMADS TO ABANDON TRADITIONAL WAY OF LIFE AND TO SEEK ASSISTANCE FROM MOROCCAN AUTHORITIES. STRAIN ON TARFAYA RESOURCES HAD BEEN SO GREAT THAT IT HAD BEEN NECESSARY TO SET UP CAMPS ON OUTSKIRTS OF AGADIR.

6. THROUGHOUT STAY IN SOUTH MISSION EXPOSED CONSTANTLY TO SAHRAOUI, BOTH IN FREQUENT "CROWD SCENES" AND IN "DIALOGUES" WITH TRIBAL DELEGATIONS. CROWD IN TAN TAN, WHICH INCLUDED TOWN'S ENTIRE POPULATION AS WELL AS REFUGEES, MAY HAVE BEEN AS LARGE AS 10,000 AND THERE WERE BIG GATHERINGS AT OTHER CITIES AS WELL. CROWDS SCREAMED, ULULATED AND CHANTED SLOGANS SUCH AS "LONG LIVE KING HASSAN; FREE THE SAHARA, SEBTA AND MELILLA; HOLY WAR FOR UNITY; AND JEWISH SPAIN, MUSLIM MOROCCO." UNDER COLONEL DLIMI'S WATCHFUL EYE, CROWDS WERE ALLOWED TO JOSTLE MISSION MEMBERS AND STAFF FROM TIME TO TIME. OVERLY ZEALOUS MILITANTS FAINTED PERIODICALLY AND WERE TREATED AT HEALTH MINISTRY FIRST AID STATIONS.

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7. MOST OF MISSION'S SUBSTANTIVE TIME IN SOUTH WAS TAKEN UP BY MEETINGS WITH DELEGATIONS OF SAHRAOUI. MOROCCAN OFFICIALS STAYED OUT OF THESE INTERVIEWS WHICH WENT ON FOR MANY HOURS IN TAN TAN AND FOR MUCH OF TWO-HOUR PERIOD THAT MISSION WAS IN ZAG. DELEGATIONS SEEMED ORDINARILY TO NUMBER ABOUT 10 AND SPOKESMEN APPEARED TO BE EMBELLISHING ON MESSAGES BEING SHOUTED BY CROWDS IN STREETS AND AT REFUGEE CAMPS.

8. SEVERAL "SPONTANEOUS" OCCURENCES DURING MISSION'S STAY IN SOUTH WERE SO DRAMATIC AS TO STRAIN CREDULITY. FIRST, AS MISSION ARRIVED IN TAN TAN, KHALI HENNA, HEAD OF SPANISH-CREATED PRO-INDEPENDENCE POLITICAL PARTY WHO HAD RECENTLY "RALLIED TO MOTHER COUNTRY" WAS REUNITED WITH MEMBERS OF HIS FAMILY, AN EVENT WHICH MOVED TARFAYA GOVERNOR TO BURST INTO PUBLIC WEEPING. NEXT, LAND ROVER WITH SPANISH ARMY MARKINGS ARRIVED AT ONE OF FEASTS WHICH
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PUNCTUATED MISSION'S MEETINGS WITH SAHRAOUI IN TAN TAN. VEHICLE, WHICH WAS RECENTLY WASHED AND PAINTED, WAS OCCUPIED BY A GROUP OF NEATLY DRESSED "GUERRILLAS" SAID TO BELONG TO PRO-MOROCCAN LIBERATION AND UNITY FRONT. THESE MEN HAD ALLEGEDLY JUST RETURNED FROM A MISSION IN THE SAHARA IN WHICH THE JEEP WAS SAID TO HAVE BEEN CAPTURED. FINALLY, ON FOLLOWING MORNING, A GROUP OF SAHRAOUI BEARING SCARS OF RECENT VINTAGE ON THEIR BACKS WERE DISPLAYED TO MISSION AND PRESS. THESE MEN WERE SAID TO HAVE GONE TO SAHARA TO CONTACT FAMILY AND FRIENDS. SPANISH SAID TO HAVE ARRESTED AND TORTURED THEM OVER AN UNSPECIFIED PERIOD OF TIME AND THEN TO HAVE THROWN THEM OUT OF COLONY JUST IN TIME TO ARRIVE IN TAN TAN TO SEE MISSION. ALL THIS WAS SIMPLY TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE.

9. MISSION SEEMED TO TAKE CAREFUL NOTE OF ALL THESE DOINGS AND TO WORK HARD AT PROGRAM MOROCCANS HAD LAID OUT. ONE UN SOURCE SAID THAT MISSION WAS LESS THAN IMPRESSED WITH CARNIVAL ATMOSPHERE IN TAN TAN IN GENERAL AND BY EFFORT TO DROWN IT IN CHAMPAGNE, SAID TO BE AKE'S PREFERRED POISON, IN PARTICULAR.

10. MOROCCANS OF VARYING POLITICAL PERSUASION SEEMED QUITE IMPRESSED BY SOUTHERN EXTRAVAGANZA. THERE WAS SOME RECOGNITION THAT SOME OF DEMONSTRATIONS LESS THAN SPONTANEOUS IN THAT SUCH THINGS AS CROWD SIZES REPORTED IN

NEWSPAPERS WERE GROSSLY EXAGGERATED. IN GENERAL, HOWEVER, MOROCCAN OFFICIALS AND JOURNALISTS APPEARED AS IMPRESSED IN PRIVATE WITH OVERALL THRUST OF REFUGEE CAMP VISITS AS THEY WERE IN PUBLIC.

11. COMMENT: AT PRESENT WE HAVE LITTLE INFORMATION ON MISSION'S MEETINGS WITH KING WHICH WERE OBVIOUSLY MOST IMPORTANT ASPECT OF VISIT.

12. GOM'S OBJECTIVE IN SOUTHERN SWING WAS TO SHOW THAT THERE WERE SAHRAOUI, BOTH IN "REFUGE" NORTH OF "ARTIFICIAL LINE" AND LIVING IN COLONY ITSELF, WHO WISHED TO SEE MOROCCO "RECOVER" THE SAHARA. OVERLY THEATRICAL APPROACH USED TO BRING THIS POINT HOME TENDED TO DIVERT ATTENTION OF NEUTRAL OBSERVERS AND MAY HAVE HAD CONFIDENTIAL

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SAME EFFECT ON MISSION.

13. IN LAST ANALYSIS MISSION'S VISIT, NOT ONLY TO MOROCCO, BUT TO REGION AS A WHOLE, SEEMS A BIT PERIPHERAL. BY FAR MOST IMPORTANT NEWS DURING ITS STAY WAS SPAIN'S ANNOUNCEMENT THAT IT INTENDED TO WITHDRAW QUICKLY FROM COLONY. THIS STOLE SO MUCH OF MISSION'S SHOW THAT AKE FELT COMPELLED TO ANNOUNCE THAT HE AND HIS ASSOCIATES WOULD CARRY ON COME WHAT MIGHT.
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